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Unions Face a Challenge

So writes Harold Poole, the Coppersmiths' Secretary

★

The Bank

R. Page Arnot's barbed wit takes the skin off the back of banker and politician alike.

Other Articles include

NOTES OF THE MONTH

by R.P.D. 1. Marxism after 75 years. 2. Look Forward in Anger. 3. Lessons of Rochdale.

MARCEL CACHIN

William Gallacher pays his tribute to the great French veteran.

SLITHERING TO RUIN

Hugo Rathbone shows what they seek to hide about the perilous position of sterling.

RAPACKI PLAN

Quaestor notes the background to the plan to win disengagement in Europe.

ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE

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THE MARCH BEGINNING

IT WAS MID-MARCH when the dreadful clamour of the guns broke out as the final German *putsch* began. Cambrai, March, 1918. The offensive to herald the spring. The imperial German army succeeded in breaking through but casualties were so appalling that the victors themselves were too exhausted to follow up. Eight months after that dreadful spring it was all over and the grass could grow green over the vast slaughter house of Europe. To be a school child then meant you need no longer hold your breath, glance aside and ask no questions when that look came over the face of an adult, standing official letter in hand. You could now shout and run about and not think any more of the millions who would not run, who would not walk, again. To a child it was indeed a bread-and-butter question. You had gone for the last time to look down from the cliffs and watch for the margarine boats to come up the river and race home, knowing there would be something on your bread that week beside plum and wood-pip jam or sprinkled sugar. You could forget the whole thing and set about catching up with those missed years 'They' owed you. For it was over and could never happen again, could it? In that war the killed and missing from the United Kingdom alone (812,317) though less than half Tzarist Russia's dead (1,700,000) were still more than six times those of the United States (126,000).

But there was a March twenty-seven years later when Hitler's primitive little horror rockets were falling from the spring sky. There was only one answer to that: to destroy the bases from which the V.2 was launched. Many British and Canadian boys died in clearing those sites, a mere 100 miles away, not 1,500 miles like the sites from which the inter-continental ballistic missile will be launched. After months of hard fighting they did wipe out the sites and so the last V.2 fell on British soil on March 27, 1945. A few months later it was all over and could never happen again, could it? In that second war killed and missing Britons numbered 395,015. The American dead were slightly fewer at 394,936, but casualties from just two American bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki exceeded that figure and they were non-combatants. Because the survivors of two generations relaxed their vigilance to control their rulers, today in peace-time, Herr von Braun, Hitler's terror weapon expert, and his 150 fellow scientists from Peenemunde, have found new paymasters across the Atlantic. Sons and grandsons of the dead of those two wars are under the command of one of Hitler's Generals. The H-bombers are overhead; and the launching sites which must be destroyed are on British soil. Those sites must and will be destroyed; but in peace—or war? The foreign troops which occupy them must go home; this March it is time to begin to march and tell them so. A spring cleaning is less costly than a spring offensive.

It is too costly to gain experience at the price of the lives of generation after generation. Better to get it from study of events, past and present. That is what our pages aim to help people to do, old and young and younger still. So it was a special pleasure to hear from a young Welshman that he thought the February L.M. 'a smasher'. He wrote: 'I picked it up and read it from cover to cover, unable to put

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

1. *Marxism After 75 Years*

THREE-quarters of a century have passed since the death of Marx. That is no more than the lifespan of one man. Marcel Cachin, that universally loved veteran fighter of the working class whose loss we mourn this month, was born two years after the publication of *Capital;* he was a lad in his fourteenth year when Marx died. It is as close as that. When Marx died, capitalism ruled the entire world. Communism was dismissed by 'enlightened' 'civilised' opinion as a visionary dream. The news of the death of Marx in London, within a cab's ride from Fleet Street, reached the argus-eyed London press two days later as an item of information from Paris.

Today? The old midwife of the new society would have recognised the world today. He would have recognised the historic leap forward of the close on one thousand millions, or over one-third of mankind, now advancing under the leadership of Communism along the path of the construction of the new society without exploiters; and achieving already such triumphs in science, technology and universal education as the old society has had to acknowledge as outstripping it and beyond its scope. He would have recog-

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nised the new life of the seven hundred millions who have won freedom from the 'swinish' colonial slavery which he denounced, and who are now building their countries anew in ever closer friendship and co-operation with the socialist world. He would have recognised the new dynamic of the further five to six hundred millions, often in lands previously untouched by the revolutionary upsurge, now engaged in battle to free their countries from the last stages of imperialist domination. He would have recognised the extended range and strength of the organised working class, exemplified in the eighty millions of the World Federation of Trade Unions, in addition to the millions still held in the imperialist-controlled breakaway which in the present phase under the banner of the cold war temporarily seeks to disrupt international working class unity.

The theory is reaching fulfilment in history on a scale few would have dared to predict three-quarters of a century ago or even half a century ago (or even a quarter of a century ago—contrast these Notes on the half century anniversary, written twenty-five years ago, and celebrating the triumph of socialism over one-sixth of the world in the midst of the deep economic crisis of capitalism in the still five-sixths imperialist and colonial world). The theory inspires ever new millions and tens of millions in conscious action. All the ferocity of the counter-revolution, through its wars of intervention, through Nazism and fascism, and now through the even more barbarous nuclear frenzy, has not been able to check it. The march of humanity sweeps forward.

Reverse 'One Sixth of the World'

What of the remaining now decidedly minority sector of the world, the reverse 'one-sixth of mankind'—the four to five hundred millions in the surviving imperialist countries? With his sardonic sense of historical irony Marx would have been able to observe how these once most advanced countries of Western Europe and North America in the van of human progress, still with enormous accumulated wealth, with a high development of science and technique, have now fallen behind in the advance of the world to become the home of historical backwardness, the temple of conservatism and reaction and fossilised institutions, the fortress of counter-revolution. Already by 1913 the acute vision of Lenin had led him to write of 'Backward Europe and Progressive Asia', when the Stock Exchanges of the 'civilised West', of London, Paris and New York, were seeking to strangle the Chinese Revolution, just as they had

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financed and bolstered up the tottering régime of Tsarism in the hope to strangle the democratic revolution in Russia. The former leaders of revolution in the world, England of the seventeenth century, or France and the United States of the eighteenth, have become its main enemy.

Cracks in the Rock

Over a century ago Marx wrote of England as

> the country which transforms whole nations into proletarians; which with its gigantic arms encompasses the whole globe; which has already once defrayed the cost of the European counter-revolution—England appears to be the rock on which the revolutionary waves split and disperse and which starves the coming society even in the womb. . . . Any social revolutionary upheaval in Europe must necessarily miscarry unless the English bourgeoisie or the industrial and commercial supremacy of Great Britain is shaken. (Marx, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, January 1, 1849.)

Those days have long since passed; not the will, but the power of counter-revolution centred in Britain has shrivelled. The financiers of London and Paris could still strangle the 1905 Revolution. But the first world war ended Britain's world supremacy. The City, for all its lavish expenditure of resources, military expeditions and international intrigue, could not defeat the 1917 Revolution ;and the subsequent building up of Hitler as the magic weapon proved a boomerang. Supremacy in the diminished capitalist world passed to the United States. The once proud Britain has become a pensioner, a client, an occupied military base, an expendable satellite of the United States; and its people are in revolt against this ignominious fate.

Peace and the Future

The United States' sanguine dreams of world domination are foundering even more quickly. These powers, with their inherited resources, can still cause vast damage and destruction; can scatter their bribes and agents, bolster up reactionary régimes, dispatch their armed forces, establish their bases and foment wars in every continent. They can still threaten universal destruction by nuclear war rather than accept the peaceful end of their declining social order. Hence the supreme task of all mankind now to defeat this menace of nuclear war—the last death-offering of capitalist civilisation to the world—and win the fight for peace. In this fight the overwhelming majority of the people also in the imperialist countries—every newspaper poll has demonstrated this—are at one with

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the advancing five-sixths of mankind against the nuclear war plans of their imperialist masters. The balance of the world has moved irreversibly.

Revisionism Old and New

The change in the world balance has brought also a shift in the battle over Marxism. Formerly it was customary to deride Marxism as an obsolete doctrine of the nineteenth century with no application to the modern world. In face of the advance of the world communist revolution over one-third of the world, and its obvious maturing in a further series of countries, this antique argument is for ever finished. A quarter of a century ago in these Notes on *Marxism After Fifty Years,* it was necessary to conduct a strenuous battle for the revolutionary teachings of Marxism against Reformism or the Old Revisionism which, in the name of a supposed alternative reformist path to socialism, preached conciliation with capitalism. This battle is not over; illusions about capitalism have even been magnified to new heights. But with the visible advance of socialism in the world, in every case on the basis of communist leadership of the working class, the context has shifted.

New Revisionism

The New Revisionism in the Labour Party (New Thinkers) now openly repudiates the traditional aim of socialism or social ownership of the means of production as inevitably leading to 'totalitarianism', and advocates instead joint stock sharing in monopoly capitalism. Similarly the subsidiary of the New Revisionism which is directed to appeal to left opinion, can no longer deny the advance of the world communist revolution, but seeks instead to utilise every incidental difficulty, hardship, grievance or miscarriage in the gigantic historical process of world revolution to proclaim 'disillusionment' with the world communist revolution and thereby pass over to unity with the camp of counter-revolution, the camp of Dulles, as over Hungary. Thus the battle for Marxism advances always to new forms with the movement of the world. 'Disillusionment' with revolution and retreat to Toryism (and a lucrative government post) in the name of 'purity' of 'ideals' is as old as Wordsworth. Illusions about capitalism or 'the new capitalism' will sprout anew as long as capitalism exists. But the present economic difficulties are already beginning to throw a doubt on some of these illusions. The advance of the historical movement is

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merciless to all who seek to retreat from the living battle into a private refuge. The New Revisionism is a sickly child. The conditions for change are gathering also in Britain.

2. *Look Forward in Anger*

A successful contemporary playwright with a very welcome artistic and dramatic talent wrote not long ago a play whose production won wide attention in London and other capitals (as did its sequel on a similar theme) under the title *Look Back in Anger.* Its theme described conditions of life in contemporary Britain with justified and often eloquent anger. Its sequel carried forward the theme in greater depth and on a broader canvas with many direct and bitter swipes at established institutions. The reception by the fashionable critics and commentators—since the play was not directly revolutionary or subversive or 'left wing' to be met with silence, but had a fashionable success—was notable. The theme of the conditions of life in contemporary Britain, even though mirrored through a peculiar non-typical setting and focus to sharpen the picture, did not interest them. Instead, they concentrated on an abstract theme of 'Anger'. To this they added another abstract theme called 'Youth'. They then proceeded to combine the writer with a number of other writers of a very different character and often inferior talent, such as Amis, Wain, Wilson, Braine, etc., to produce a composite amalgam under the label 'Angry Young Men'. As is well known, once a label has been attached by Fleet Street to any person, institution or idea, it will stick for ever with a glue whose adhesive qualities are guaranteed indissoluble. If this author at the age of ninety were to write a Wordsworthian pastoral idyll on the innocent bliss of country life in contrast to the fret and frenzy of industrial civilisation, the critics (if we can so far stretch our imagination as to picture existing society continuing to that date) would no doubt blandly remark that the A.Y.M. has begun to mellow. But in their speed to concentrate on the 'Anger' they failed to read the four words of the title. They missed the 'Look Back'. Yet here is the crux of the question. For to 'look back'—if it is *only* looking back—is in the most literal sense the hallmark of the reactionary.

Whither Anger?

Anger is a holy thing. Anger with the existing conditions of life of class society—or, translated into intellectual terms, the

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critique of existing institutions—is the beginning of wisdom. It is sometimes said by fools that Marxist literary criticism demands that the writer or artist must directly present a specific political conclusion in his work, must offer a ready-made formula to answer the problem of the situation he reveals. This caricature would not survive five minutes of study of what Marx wrote on literature. The province of the writer and the artist is to *see* and to *feel*—to see life truthfully, with all the passion of his being and the strength of his understanding, and to depict it with a vision which illuminates the vision of all of us, makes the familiar new, awakens dulled and dormant capacities of feeling, and deepens the sense and understanding of life and human relations. To draw the conclusions remains for the hearer, the viewer, the reader, for the process of thought. The most painstaking attempt to convey a possibly correct, theoretical, moral, political or practical viewpoint or conclusion through the medium of a work of literature or art, without the gift of direct artistic vision and feeling and illumination and the power to express it, could obviously be, at the best, only a well-intentioned failure, and, at the worst, comic. On the other hand, a writer may be politically confused, or in his theory at the mercy of obsolete or reactionary prejudices, and yet have so strong and truthful an artistic vision of the life he sees that his picture conveys more than he realises and outweighs in its value any shortcoming in theoretical understanding.

Milton, Balzac and Kipling

Milton, that hero of English poetry and fearless fighter of the English Republican Revolution, may have personally preferred *Paradise Regained* to *Paradise Lost* because he wished to justify the ways of God to man; but it was *Paradise Lost* that became his immortal epic and the Revolt of Lucifer that became his central theme symbolising the spirit of revolution to whose cause he had devoted all his powers, his energies and his eyesight. The classic example in Marxist literary criticism of the distinction between the subjective theory of a writer and the significance of his artistic creation is that of Balzac, that 'master of realism', as Engels called him, who was a legitimist monarchist in his political views, but whose artistic integrity compelled him in the truth of his picture of society 'to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices'. Or, to take an example from a more recent period, Kipling was in his articulate views a screaming jingo, but the merciless clarity of his artistic vision led him more than once in his creative

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work to produce the most ruthless indictment of class society (*The Sons of Mary and the Sons of Martha*) and of imperialism.

Socialist Realism

This does not mean that political consciousness is of secondary importance. On the contrary, more and more with the development of modern society, with the increasing clarity of social issues and class antagonisms, and especially since the onset of the world socialist revolution as the dominating reality of our age, political consciousness becomes the indispensable foundation of full truth of vision, since lack of political consciousness of social issues at this day and age can only be blindness or self-deception. That is why modern realism has inevitably become socialist realism. Because the artist must first see and feel, he is not absolved from the necessity of thinking. But it does mean that there can be no simple straight-line deduction from a political viewpoint to an artistic valuation. If we criticise John Osborne (and the only purpose of contemporary literary criticism should be to endeavour to assist the development of an artist by the contribution of a viewpoint from his audience), it is not because he fails to insert a political formula or moralising conclusion to suit the predilections of a section. That would be as inappropriate as the corresponding type of criticism which at the outset played havoc with the understanding of Ibsen, and against which Shaw had to fight. Criticism of a writer or artist must be related to what he is trying to convey.

Forwards or Backwards?

There is anger and there is anger. All the conditions of life in contemporary Britain, from top to bottom, if seen with any sense of life, give cause abounding for anger. If these very selfsame conditions have dulled in any such sense of anger, we are indebted to the artist who can kindle it anew. But anger is the beginning, not the end. Anger is a sign that can face both ways. It can face backwards or it can face forwards. The Diehard Tory or the sentimental hankerer after lost feudal glories can also be furious with modern conditions, with what he regards as the sordid vulgarity of modern commercial mass methods or what he is pleased to describe as the 'Age of the Common Man'. After the first world war a then new and younger poet, T. S. Eliot, wrote a memorable poem called *The Waste Lands*, which was a scathing picture of the breakup and decay of the Western European capitalist social order. It was a striking poem; it opened certain new forms in poetic technique; and its ferocity of denunciation of existing society led

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some on the left to try to attribute to it a positive revolutionary significance. Not so. It denounced the present from the standpoint of the past. Its author duly developed as an Anglican High Tory.

Forwards to Life

Which way will Osborne travel? Why only 'Look *Back*' in anger? Is the only truly sympathetic character in *The Entertainer* the *old man* who represents the solidity and self-respect of a vanished age? (Strange that the chatterers about 'youth' have failed to note this point.) Can only the *memory* of the 'thirties represent the conception of causes worth fighting for? Certainly an author must not be identified with the sentiments he puts in the mouths of his characters. But he is responsible for the total effect of his action and presentation. The social decay of late imperialist Britain, the degeneration and disintegration, the falsification and deception, the sense of frustration and apathy and lack of aim—all this is not difficult to portray. It abounds in the society around us. But it is not the whole picture. For half a century artists have made their fortunes from the vivid presentation of social decay and corruption, sometimes regarded by the innocent as scathing indictments of existing society. But if the picture is only passive, if it only presents the decay and hopelessness as the whole picture, with no assertion of life and of the supremacy of life, then it is not true to life; it is only a reflection of the decay—the phosphorescence, however brilliant, on the surface of the decay. If the evil conditions are only seen against the background of the past, of a society that once had values and that is now lost, with no face to the future, then the presentation is strictly reactionary. We do not ask that the dramatist should insert some ready-made political formula for the solution of the problems that he poses. This is the task for the political thinker, not for the dramatist. But if the presentation of evil conditions does not also look to the future as well as the past, does not include as an essential element in the picture the expression of the determination to end them, does not arouse in the audience as the final outcome the determination to change these conditions, even though the characters may not be possessed of the solution, may still be searching, then the total effect is false to the spirit of life. As Marx said over a century ago:

> These circumstances cry out to us: 'This cannot remain so, this must become different, and we ourselves, we human beings, must make it different.' (Marx, letter to Kriege, 1846.)

That is the spirit of life. That is the spirit of revolution.

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3. *Lessons of Rochdale*

And now, with this in mind, let us come to the electors of Rochdale. For they also were angry. And they also were not yet able to find their solution. Whatever the divergent interpretations, there is universal agreement that Rochdale was a landmark and a portent in current political development. In a Tory seat, with an 80 per cent poll, more than 80 per cent of those who voted (or two-thirds of the entire electorate, that is, of the entire adult population) registered their votes against the Tory candidate. Seldom has there been such a vote of No Confidence in any Government. But it was not only a vote of No Confidence in the Tory Government. It was also a vote of No Confidence in the present operation of the two-party system. If the main anger was justly turned against the Tory Government, and the Tory proportion of the vote slumped from 51·5 per cent to 19·8 per cent, the Labour proportion also declined slightly from 48·5 to 44·7 per cent. Thus there was a diminution of confidence in both the dominant parties, normally presented in the existing operation of the two-party system as the only governmental alternatives before the electorate, yet with a still continuing deep bi-partisanship on top in respect of all the fundamental issues affecting the life of the people (NATO, the cold war, rearmament, American military occupation and missile sites, wage restraint). The anger, the dissatisfaction with the existing, the search for an alternative were manifest. All that was missing was the alternative policy.

Contradiction of Rochdale

Here arose the tragedy of Rochdale in the midst of all that was so positive in this overwhelming condemnation of the Tory Government and search for an alternative to bi-partisanship. For the only direct and explicit expression of this search for an alternative went to the benefit of an essentially spurious 'third alternative', the attempted resuscitation of the Liberal museum piece, with an identical policy with the official policies of bi-partisanship on all major issues, and dividing its parliamentary votes in almost equal proportions between Toryism and Labour. The Tory Government of the landlords and big capital inflicts the cruelties of the Rent Act on millions of tenants to inflate the already swollen incomes of the property trusts (in one notorious case an estate company, having already successfully raised its dividends from 11 per cent to 12 per cent *before* the Rent Act came to the rescue of its hardships, pro-

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ceeds to use the Rent Act to serve notices of eviction on a tenant in order to raise the rent of his flat nine times). Labour is at any rate identified in the public mind with the cause of the tenants, and officially stands for the repeal of the Rent Act, even though in practice also supporting some increase of rents. But Liberalism at Rochdale offers to represent *equally* 'the interests of the landlords and the interests of the tenants'. Liberalism all over. This is the situation, and the warning of Rochdale, which carries the most urgent lessons for all socialists and militants in the Labour and trade union movement to strengthen the fight for an effective alternative policy to Toryism, such as is capable of rousing the confidence of the people.

A Lesson in Democracy

There is another significant lesson in Rochdale. The signing of the Anglo-American Missile Agreement to seal the fate of Britain was taking place or due to take place at the very moment of the Rochdale by-election. No more momentous issue was ever before the people. The lives of every man, woman and child in Britain were being signed away. Was there any question of consulting the people on this issue? On the very day of the Rochdale by-election, on February 12, Mr. Sandys was informing parliament that there could be no question of letting parliament even know the contents of the agreement before it was signed, nor could he guarantee the subsequent publication of the full text. Had the Rochdale electors any opportunity of declaring their will on this most vital matter determining their future survival? It so happened that both the anti-Tory candidates declared their personal opposition to the H-bomb, but this could not commit the official policy of their parties. Thus 80 per cent of the voters voted indirectly and by implication against the H-bomb; but their only choice of parties was between three parties all committed to the tri-partisan nuclear strategy, the NATO H-bomb 'deterrent' and American military occupation and missile sites. Such was their freedom of choice on the most important issues before the people. An illuminating practical demonstration of the functioning of the democratic system as it exists at present in this country.

Democracy and War

This is nothing new. In the entire record of imperialist democracy the most important issues which determine the fate of the people have never been submitted to the supposedly sovereign

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electorate. Before the first world war the secret commitments of Asquith, Grey and Haldane which prepared the war were never even divulged to the rest of the Cabinet until the last moment, when it was too late. The preceding two elections four years before the outbreak were fought on the 'People's Budget' (on which Lloyd George later boasted that the increased taxation presented for popular support as raiding the rich to pay for social services, in reality provided the funds for the Navy's Dreadnoughts), 'Peers versus People' or Home Rule for Ireland. In the United States in 1916 President Wilson was re-elected on the slogan 'He Kept Us Out of War'; the war followed. Before the second world war the only issue of foreign policy presented to the electorate at the election four years before was the pledge of firm and unyielding adherence to the Covenant and collective security against the then proceeding fascist aggression; Munich followed. So now with the still graver issue of the American Missile Agreement and the American bomber bases in Britain. Hence the supreme importance that this time the pressure of the mass movement, also through extra-parliamentary forms, shall be made effective before it is too late.

Nuclear Mania

The new Defence White Paper underlines the gravity and urgency of this battle. In the face of the collapse of all the assumptions of last year's White Paper, Mr. Sandys evidently believes in the motto 'Never apologise! Never withdraw!' When every responsible commentator in the United States and Britain has recognised that, after the Sputniks and the Soviet priority in the possession of the inter-continental ballistic missile, the Western 'policy of strength' and nuclear blackmail is no longer tenable and must give place to a new approach (even though they still drag their feet in facing the logical consequences of such a new approach, that is, genuine negotiation of equals), Mr. Sandys seeks to brazen it out with noisier assertions of his shipwrecked thesis. When the American strategic reports, as in the Gaither Report, have admitted that during the next few years until the United States has reached the stage of the inter-continental missile, the West will necessarily depend on what they term 'Russian benevolence' (thus incidentally destroying the myth of the supposed menace of Soviet aggression). Mr. Sandys is satisfied to observe that 'the overall superiority of the West is likely to increase'. No wonder that even the *Daily Telegraph* was led to make the wry comment: 'If these statements are to be relied

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on, much of the strategic and political controversy of the months since the Sputniks was launched have been nonsense'. Not satisfied with this nuclear mania, Mr. Sandys proceeds simultaneously to plan new extensions for the role of other armed forces (for all purposes except defending Britain, written off as impossible to defend in the event of war), including the establishment of reinforced overseas bases for the domination of the Middle East and the Far East. In place of the drastic reduction in arms expenditure promised as a result of the nuclear policy, the estimates offered are little different from the heavy level of the previous year, with plenty of room for supplementaries to come as the cost of the nuclear projects expand. This is a programme of megalomaniac suicide.

Economic Menace

The price of this madness is already being paid by the people. At a time when the increasing disorganisation of capitalist world economy, and the downward turn in the development of production and employment, have to be admitted, the destructive madness of intensifying the arms drive is pursued, and is even offered by the highest 'statesmen' as a 'solution'. In face of five million unemployed in the United States, President Eisenhower proclaims his optimism for a speedy turn by the second half of the year, and openly bases his prediction primarily on the increase in arms expenditure made possible by the deliberately engineered hysteria over the Sputniks (planned increase in arms expenditure by $5·8 billion, or £2,000 million, as against an increase in civilian public expenditure by $1·5 billion). The majority of his official economic advisers query his prediction. But in Britain the burden of arms expediture, already heavier in proportion to population and national income than in any other major country in the world, weighs down and further disorganises an already weakened and overburdened economy. The ominous signs of a rapid advance in the extension of unemployment and short time; piling up of coal stocks; steel below capacity, furnaces shut down; alongside ceaselessly renewed attacks on social standards, conditions and services—these are the harvest of 'Tory prosperity'.

What Programme?

In a memorable moment of truth the late Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, who resigned through the divisions arising in Tory ruling circles in face of the economic situation, described the chronic crisis of Britain's post-war economy and the inability of successive

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Governments, Labour or Tory, to deal with it. He was in fact only reiterating the same rueful conclusion which the previous Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, had equally found himself forced to enunciate nearly a decade earlier, when in 1949 he confessed that they had been trying to meet the problem 'by a series of temporary expedients, which have led to a series of crises as each expedient became exhausted'. But the grim irony of this situation is that, in the face of this experience of twelve years, Labour's official spokesmen have still no solution to offer save to repeat the old bankrupt slogans of Cripps—More Production and Wage Restraint. More Production to continue to carry the burdens of the cold war programme and rearmament policy, and Wage Restraint as the necessary accompaniment to restrict the people from enjoying the results of their increased output. Labour Party representatives have even been actively engaged in negotiation with General Council representatives to press on them the virtues of a policy of wage restraint. Once bitten, twice shy. The majority of trade union leaders have so far shown an understandable caution.

Battle for the Future

Half-hearted capitulation to the economic demands of Toryism and the employers only disorganises the workers. The situation requires the strongest united fight of the organised working class against these demands and for the demands on wages and hours and conditions already put in by six million workers. Alongside this, and in unity with this immediate fight, it requires on the political field an aggressive offensive against Toryism to present an alternative programme for a radical turn from the existing foreign and strategic imperialist policies of Britain in the direction of peaceful co-existence and non-alignment, and on this foundation for tackling the economic problems of Britain and leading the way for social and economic change in the interest of the social needs of the people. Without such a programme for a drastic change in Britain's position, for banishing the menace of nuclear war, for tackling Britain's crisis and opening the way to the advance to socialism, the bits and pieces of social legislation at present offered by Labour are not enough to answer the questions in the minds of the electorate, and to transform the disillusionment with Toryism into positive advance. This above all is the lesson of Rochdale; and it is a lesson above all for the most active militant socialist,

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communist and progressive fighters of the Labour, trade union and co-operative movement to apply, and by their united strength to make effective.

Indictment of a Régime

There are moments in the downward path of a dying régime which illuminate its rottenness before the eyes of the entire people. Such a moment was the affair of the Diamond Necklace before the French Revolution. Such a moment was the role of Rasputin before the Russian Revolution. Such a moment was revealed in a preliminary form in Britain when a British Tory Premier submitted his speeches to be censored and revised by a Mussolini. Such a moment has now been revealed in a sharper form in Britain, when the entire official world, Government Ministers, Judges, Bishops and Press Lords, have united to acclaim the Bank Tribunal's finding that there is nothing wrong with a Director of the Bank of England declaring: 'It is anti-British and derogatory to sterling, but on balance it makes sense to me'. Thou hast said it. The old foxes of the ruling class are losing their cunning. They failed even to make a scapegoat. Instead, they have united to denounce and anathematise with fury any simple soul who might find anything wrong with such a sentiment. Thereby they have transformed the issue to make it, no longer the question of an individual, or of a group of individuals, or of an institution, but of their whole régime. They have united to emblazon the motto 'Anti-British' on their crests, not as the epithet of their enemies, but as the accolade of their friends. Such is the hallmark of a dying régime. The ruling class in Britain are becoming accursed in the eyes of the British people. But their downfall finally requires the courage and the confidence of a leadership and a programme that truly represents the class which will supplant them.

February 18, 1958. R.P.D.

LABOUR MONTHLY
134, Ballards Lane, London, N.3.
Editor: R. Palme Dutt.
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UNIONS FACE A CHALLENGE

*HAROLD POOLE

A FEW weeks ago Alfred Robens asked the Minister of Labour, Mr. Iain Macleod, the following question in the House of Commons: 'Do you realise the very dangerous industrial situation into which this country is slowly drifting as a result of your refusal to have an inquiry into the London bus claim?' The question followed the government's rejection of a proposal for setting up a committee of investigation into the claim of 53,000 drivers, conductors and inside staff for an increase of 25 shillings a week. The proposal emerged from talks at the Ministry of Labour and is reliably reported to have had the support, not only of the Transport and General Workers' Union and the employers (London Transport), but also of Macleod himself and Sir Wilfred Neden, his chief Industrial Commissioner. It was only after the matter had been reported to senior Government members that Macleod announced the rejection of the proposal.

This refusal by the government to use its own machinery of conciliation did more to alarm the trade unions, and particularly the T.G.W.U., than probably anything that has happened since the Tories declared their deliberate intention of putting the screw on all pay claims.

It is true that later the government changed its attitude and agreed to the union's demand—arising from a delegate conference of the men—that the claim should be referred to the industrial court for voluntary arbitration, but it changed its attitude because it knew its policy had aroused violent opposition amongst the men and was leading to the complete disruption of the service. It has yet to be proved whether the decision to go to the industrial court was the correct one in the circumstances: but it is here interesting to recall that the men's leaders stated that they reserved the right to use the machinery of the union if the findings of the court were unsatisfactory. Following quickly in the wake of the veto by the

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*Mr. Poole, as many of our readers will know, is general secretary of the National Society of Coppersmiths, Braziers and Metalworkers. When working in the East End of London some years ago, he was secretary of the Muriel Lester Restitution Fund—in which the late George Lansbury, 'Father' of the Labour Party, was keenly interested. Mr. Poole was churchwarden at All Saints' Church, Poplar, from 1935 to 1941. He is now a chorister at St. George's Church, Harrow, Middlesex.

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Minister of Health, Mr. Derek Walker-Smith, on the three per cent pay rise for 40,000 Health Service workers; the directives given to arbitration tribunals that they must bear government economic policy in mind when adjudicating on pay claims; and the Treasury's guidance to government departments that pay concessions should be offset by economies in the services concerned; following all this, the treatment meted out to the London busmen served to underline the rigidity of government policy and to alert all unions to realise that maximum pressure by their members will be needed to secure increases.

Responsible union leaders, who are expected to try and maintain peace in industry, do not pledge themselves to keep the peace at any price. The workers are asking 'Where are we going? Are we, as useful citizens, to stand by and allow our living standards to fall? To see food, housing, fares, clothing and other things we need in order to live decently rise in price without a murmur from the unions? Are we expected to go through the wages machinery with the answer always "No" at the end?' The employers never give pay rises out of the goodness of their hearts. They give only to the extent that they are forced to by sound trade union organisation. The employers never change—even when they have profit harvests. When the workers threaten some force of direct action to get their rights, the employers and unions are normally called to the Ministry of Labour for conciliation. But recent experience shows that even conciliation officers (civil servants) cannot do their job, because of government policy. Behind the scenes they are admitting that their task has become most difficult, if not impossible, to tackle successfully.

Generally speaking, we know now what to expect from conciliation, arbitration and negotiations—if the government gets its way. All claims will be resisted. That being so, it may well be that we are entering a period of industrial unrest with, as usual, most of the capitalist newspapers crying aloud that the workers and their unions are sabotaging the national interests! Engineering and shipbuilding workers are already asking what will the position be in the near future when the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions makes its claim for a pay rise for nearly three million in the industry. If the pattern set in other industries extends to engineering and shipbuilding and we are met with blank refusal—as I believe is the government's intention—serious industrial unrest can lie ahead.

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What will be the position in October when the full impact of Tory rent increases is felt in thousands of working class homes? We are determined that the workers' living standards shall not worsen. I, for one, am convinced that the workers will struggle to maintain the standards they have fought so hard for over the years. To assist this struggle to defeat the government's attack on pay and working conditions, complete unity in action is vital. And complete unity in action demands that all workers should be active in their appropriate trade unions.

On the forty-hour week—the introduction of which is long overdue—an important factor has arisen. Already we can see the long arm of redundancy stretching out to more and more workers and embracing them in its ugly grip. We know that big pockets of unemployment have grown in areas where men and women once worked. We demand a shorter working week because we believe our people should enjoy the benefits of technological developments and not that they should be made to suffer by them. We believe our people should work and have leisure. We say it is better to have a forty-hour week, with full employment, than to have a week of forty-four or more hours with workers walking the streets. We shall resist with all our might the position where eleven workers, say, scramble for ten jobs. We say to this government: 'We work to live, not live to work'.

We also say to the Tories: 'You must ensure that negotiating machinery is used fairly and squarely. We will not allow you to use it to carry through a policy of wage freezing. In doing this we are defending our people, our country'. That is our challenge. We say that industrial relations must be kept on the highest plane. Those who toil must get the best possible results from their labour. And prices and profits must be kept down and controlled.

The entire labour movement must decide that the Tory period of office is coming to an end. Meanwhile we intend to see that wage claims are judged on their merits: to see that living standards rise, not fall. We refuse to allow the working people, from whose labour the creation of wealth depends, to bear the burden of Tory rule.

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MARCEL CACHIN

September 20, 1869—February 12, 1958

We mourn the death of Marcel Cachin, the great Frenchman whose service to the working class movement dated from before his entry in 1891 into the Workers' Party led by Guesde and Paul Lafargue, Marx's son-in-law, whom he succeeded in 1912 as director of L'Humanité. *Present at the great International Socialist Congresses of Amsterdam in 1904 and Stuttgart in 1907, he was a link with the best in the old socialism of France and of Europe. Founder of the French Communist Party, he was renowned as an orator and as a writer. His last article for* Labour Monthly *appeared in 1949, in which, estimating the French Miners' strike, he wrote of the scorn of the French people for 'rulers who are preparing for war in their servile obedience to the American magnates'. Two years later he recalled his own earliest activity as a teacher of philosophy when, in a message of greeting on our 30th Anniversary, he estimated* Labour Monthly's *work, saying it had been 'the great and unrivalled merit' of this journal 'to defend the scientific tradition from the times of Locke and Darwin down to the representatives of modern science'.—Ed., L.M.*

William Gallacher writes :

My old comrade, my grand old comrade, Marcel Cachin, has after a long, long, life of service to the great cause of Socialism, passed silently to rest. His loss will be deeply felt by our brother party in France, by the French working class, and by the Communist and liberation forces in all parts of the world.

Although I had read of him before, and during, the First World War it was not until 1920 that I met him, in person, at the Second Congress of the Communist International. Already, at that time, he had long years of Socialist activity behind him and this earned him the respect, not only of the delegates from the countries outside the young Soviet Union, but in a very special way the warm regard of Lenin and the Bolshevik delegation. It was a real pleasure to see Lenin and Marcel Cachin in earnest conversation. The shortage of materials, the shortage of bread, the Civil War and the Polish War, these for the moment were, one might have

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thought, forgotten, as these two comrades discussed the situation in France and the adjacent countries.

But it was far otherwise. For, particularly, in relation to war, the winning over of the French Socialist Party was of the highest importance and when Marcel Cachin sent off his telegram from Moscow proposing that the French Socialist Party join up with the Third (Communist) International, he aroused the greatest enthusiasm in every delegation.

For thirty years before that Congress of 1920 he had been a valuable, energetic leader of the French Socialist movement and of the French working class; but the thirty-eight years since has excelled by far his earlier service. Many times during this latter period I met and talked with him. What a keen, active comrade he was, what an example to the young comrades in France and here in Britain. Resolute, unshakeable, incorruptible, Marcel Cachin will live forever in the great movement he did so much to build, the Communist Party of France, and the liberation forces of all lands.

LABOUR MONTHLY TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

REVISIONISM

Revisionism was seen in its time as an ideological and political controversy of doctrines and tactics. Today we can see it more simply as an expression of the period of imperialism leading up to the war (when it could still appear to philistines and idiots as 'progressive', 'liberal', expanding 'social reforms', and even 'pacific') and of certain social strata (mainly petit-bourgeois professional, civil servants, sections of the aristocracy of labour) closely connected with the process of imperialist corruption, and temporarily riding on the wave. The supposed 'theories', which were once so solemnly discussed, and have long since disappeared into the waste-paper basket under the merciless disproof of facts—the denial of the concentration of capital, the imagined diminution of crises, the harmonising of the contradictions of Capitalism, the reconciliation of classes, the improvement of the condition of the masses, the democratising of the state, etc.—can now be conspicuously seen as the short-sighted illusions of a temporary phase and of special strata. Twenty, thirty and forty years ago the Fabians and progressives could still endeavour to speak patronisingly and pityingly of Marx as 'obsolete', as not understanding modern progress, and of the Marxists as 'revolutionary romantics', etc. Today their tune is changed to a general fit of the blues and self-doubting. It is their own writings and theories that have become musty and forgotten, and bear already an antiquated and parochial air. The world war shattered their little house of cards and revealed Marxism anew as the science of world realities.

From *Notes of the Month* by R.P.D. March, 1933.

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REFLEXIONS ON THE BANK

R. PAGE ARNOT

'SAFE as the Bank of England!' So runs the proverb: or, at any rate, so ran it until late on in 1957. The white cliffs of Dover might crumble; indeed they do crumble: but not the Bank of England. The cliffs of Dover, some 260 feet high, are being eroded, brought down foot by foot: the Bank of England, 260 years high, seemed to grow taller and stronger with every reckoning day. It stood foursquare to all winds, withstood all buffeting of reformers, Keynes among them. Long ago, it became a proverb.

'Safe as the Bank of England.' Is it so very safe, after all? Nobody, and certainly no director of it, can now be quite as sure about it as he used to be. These are strange days. Perhaps even the divinity that shapes their ends (the name of which is not to be uttered, as Yahweh was by the ancient Hebrews unspokenly worshipped) is not so safe either. Look at what has happened: and all since last summer. Directors of the Bank of England have been haled before a tribunal,* there to be keel-hauled by that scourge of law-breakers, the Attorney-General; there to be re-assured by a kindly judge, who was only doing his duty; then to have their stumbling sentences recorded for ever in all their inarticulate nakedness.

This calamity, this degradation, this tearing as it were with hot pincers was inflicted upon them without warning, without any ominous signs. No Bastille was stormed in the nineteen-fifties, none in Britain at any rate. They were not forewarned: they did not hear the trumpets of Germinal, the tumbrils toiling up the terrible way: there were no stage props., no sans culottes (neither Gaitskell nor Wilson could be cast for that part, no matter what faces they pull), no knitting-women, no gory executioner. No, all this horrid examination and cross-examination was meted out to them by their friends. It was their friends in the Treasury (especially First Lord Macmillan and the Chancellor of the Exchequer) who put this abomination upon them. Because of a politician's honour, directors of the Bank of England had to be washed in public. No such

*Proceedings of the Tribunal appointed to Inquire into allegations that information about the raising of Bank Rate was improperly disclosed. December, 1957. H.M.S.O., £2.

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indignity has been known since the trial of the seven bishops for seditious libel—seven years before the Bank of England was born.

Wounded in the house of their friends, in the House of Commons! Well may they be bitter; well may their gall overflow into the city weeklies and the editorial columns of the kept press. What wonder if a member of the Court of Directors in the bitterness of his heart were to say privily to his fellow (though he had better say it to the wife of his bosom whom no tribunal can compel to give evidence of words lightly spoken):

> Why, these parliamentary people after all are a shoddy set of persons, paid to be sitting there while 'In the old days', to quote our Governor* 'when most Directors were individual merchants or partners in merchant firms,' a gentleman from the City (like Ricardo himself) would pay £5,000 or £10,000 for a seat in the Commons. These politicians, each with a minimum payment of £1,500 a year (and an extra amount for the leader of the opposition), they and their motions have more and more become a mere ritual which bears as much relation to Government (in Cromwell's sense) as the doings of the Trobriand Islanders† with whose ritual of uneconomic gifts the Liberal Pole Malinovsky used to delight those who had an inner yearning to disbelieve what they imagined to be the teachings of Marx.

Fortunately for British constitutional myths we shall never overhear one of these merchant bankers thus beginning to give the game away. But that the City, its private dealings thus pried into, has been seriously perturbed, there is no doubt whatever. They have had a rude awakening from their dreams (How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this Bank, said Shakespeare to Sir Thomas Gresham) and had all their customary operations exposed to the full glare of daylight. Landed before this tribunal, they were out of their element—like stranded jelly-fish.

Yet the Tribunal could not have been kinder or more thorough. It took evidence or considered statements from more persons than there are days in a year. Nobody was accused and therefore nobody could be condemned or acquitted: but the Tribunal complimented City gentlemen for their behaviour under examination and exonerated them all. Said Home Secretary Butler:

> Its Report has, indeed, done everything possible to proclaim the financial integrity of the City of London. (Hansard, February 3, 1958.)

With these words of Mr. Butler the scene shifts back to the Houses of Parliament. It was there they blew the tempest up. Now the

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*ibid. page 208. [8040.]

†These Trobriand islanders keep cropping up still. Apart from *The Economist* (a right-bank boulevard journal) they were seen gambolling in *The Times* the other day.

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storm was back in its original tea-cup. The mild public schoolboys, then highly correct (if temporary) civil servants who have finally graduated as the leading figures of the Labour front bench, had no desire to make mischief: they were only doing their duty by putting up a show of opposition, in this case by utilising what they had gleaned from reading the daily papers. That was in September. By October the hare they had started seemed worth while following up, especially as they were not otherwise making much of a job of opposing the government—and certainly less than was expected of them in the trade unions. When they were smarting under the Lord Chancellor's adverse decision, rejecting their request for an inquiry (as communicated by the Prime Minister on October 22) there came further rumours, one of which seemed to implicate the Conservative Central Office. If true (it was not) then the fat was in the fire.

Long ago there was 'the Marconi scandal'. It was 1911. The reputations of Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and of other ministers were assailed, and brought before a Select Committee of the House of Commons. They were formally cleared. But allegations were made also against the Central Liberal Office and the use of the secret party funds. Here the main witness, the Chief Liberal Whip, the Master of Elibank, director of S. Pearson & Son, was inaccessible at Bogota, away on oil business, in the interior of South America: and could not be got back in time. Nearly half a century later Mr. Oliver Poole, deputy chairman of the Conservative Party organisation, was 'Director of a number of Companies in the Pearson Group' [4966]. To those with memories it must have seemed (though wrongly) that the whirligig of time had brought his revenges. At any rate by November 12 the question was popped in parliament: and the sequel was the parliamentary resolution to set up a tribunal. This, while it cleared Mr. Poole, had unexpected consequences and effects in the City. As Mr. Harold Wilson said: 'Most of the information that has come before the Tribunal was stuff I did not even suspect existed'. [10559.]

What were the allegations? In this case, as in most such cases from Marconi onwards, it was that public office was improperly used 'for the purpose of private gain'. This was the allegation against Annas and Caiaphas the High Priest when the money-changers were driven from the temple. This precious couple had been getting a 'rake off'. Conrad Noel over a third of a century ago explained from the pulpit that for hundreds of years public

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men had paid lip service to the standpoint of Jesus, that public office should not be made the opportunity for private gain, until Sir Austen Chamberlain had taken up an opposite point of view about government contracts.* This then was the nature of the allegations: 'improper disclosure' and if so, use of it 'for the purpose of private gain'. Every such allegation was completely and utterly, unanimously and unhesitatingly rejected by the Tribunal, and found to have no justification.† The next step was for the Government to put the Report to the House of Commons and to use it as a weapon against the Opposition. This rope's end was indicated by Home Secretary Butler and paid out with exceeding clumsiness by Paymaster-General Maudling at the end of the second day's debate:

> I will finish on this note. This vote will be like a vote of censure. But it will not be a vote of censure on the Government; they were exonerated by the Tribunal. It will be a vote of censure upon right honourable Gentlemen opposite. (Hansard, February 4, 1958.)

The Government carried the vote. But the victory was within the walls of the chamber. They had been too clever by half: they had scored in the parliamentary game at the cost of real damage to the prestige of the ruling class.

In the first place the Tribunal and its proceedings, instead of being received with reverent welcome, was on the Labour benches dismissed as worthy only of slight consideration. The dreadful word 'Whitewash' was applied to its Report which afforded not even a single solitary scapegoat. Since the moral defeat of the Opposition depended on their submissiveness, it needed only a show of parliamentary resistance and the challenging of a division to reduce the Report to a mere party weapon.

What is the explanation? Parliamentary cretinism—the disease Dr. Marx diagnosed long before it had become epidemic? No. Parliamentary cretinism may be blamed for much that happens (and for much more that does not happen) but it has not turned the skilled politician Rab Butler into a nincompoop: nor has it made him imagine (whatever may have been the Maudling thoughts) that a Tory slogan of 'Dilly dilly duckling, come and be killed' would draw loud quacks of approval from the Labour drakes.

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*It recalls the old saying 'The more the British Empire expands, the more the Chamberlain family contracts'.

†Cmnd. 350. Report of the Tribunal.

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PEACE — THE SWORD-SWALLOWER

he birth of Honoré Daumier,
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Only persons smarting from unearned exposure, only the anguished souls of City gentlemen could think it good parliamentary tactics. Mr. Butler was clearly yielding to pressure from quarters whose plea he could not resist: 'We have been made your catspaws in this business: now you politicians be our catspaws for a couple of days: kindly scratch out for us the eyes of these Labour libellers and scandalmongers'. Hence the parliamentary spitefulness of these two days which effectively both buried and canonised the Report. The Tories had tried to use their shield as a weapon of offence. No result within parliament but dents in the shield.

Outside parliament the effects of the whole business are much greater. First the ordinary workings of the City, thus brought into the light of day, are witnessed with disgust by honest trade unionists ('a score of working class families earn less in a year's hard work than these people make on the side in a couple of days') who realise all the more that there are countries doing pretty well without any stock exchange, stock brokers or stock jobbers, frenzied finance or futile financiers—even without capitalists and landlords.

Second, the Tory defence of the Bank of England, nationalised twelve years ago by the Labour Government, and the Labour criticism of it, reveals that it was either a fake nationalisation or a mere piece of window dressing by Messrs. Attlee and Dalton.

Sir John Braithwaite, chairman of the London Stock Exchange, may have sought to comfort the Institute of Bankers by saying there was 'more know-how and technical mastery of international finance in the City of London than anywhere else'. His view was that

> I think it is often the casual and informal discussion between members of a board of directors at odd times, and over meals, that is more formative and important than what is said in formal discussion and debate. I do not, of course, know how it may be in the Bank, but I have certainly found it so myself in not altogether dissimilar circumstances.
>
> (*The Times*, February 12, 1958.)

Sir John's after-dinner speech must seem a bit naïf to those who followed the procession of City mediocrities through the proceedings of the Tribunal. Not an array of great personalities but a gallery of personifications of Capital. Mole-like, they each seek their little bit of profit, occasionally a big bit: and like all the rest of creation they do their bit for the greater glory of that divinity by whom they live and have their being.

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BACKGROUND TO THE RAPACKI PLAN

QUÆSTOR provides a reference note to the proposals about the demilitarised zone

'WE should be ready to examine the possibility of a demilitarised area between East and West', said Sir Anthony Eden at the opening session of the Summit Conference at Geneva (July 18, 1955). Practical proposals for this purpose have been put forward by the Socialist countries, and are being discussed all over the world. They have so far taken two forms—creation of a European zone free of nuclear weapons: and mutual withdrawal of troops and armaments from the line dividing East and West in Europe.

1. *A European zone free from atomic and nuclear weapons*

The first stage was the suggestion, made in the Declaration of the Warsaw Treaty States, that stocks of atomic and nuclear weapons be prohibited in both parts of Germany (January 28, 1956). This was repeated in the Soviet proposals at the Disarmament Sub-Committee (March 27, 1956) and in Bulganin's letter to Macmillan on July 20, 1957.

A second stage was reached during the Disarmament Sub-Committee discussions of 1957. The Soviet representative, Zorin, twice proposed (March 18 and August 16) that the zone might include both parts of Germany 'and states adjacent to them'. At the same time the U.S.S.R. went on pressing that at least it should apply to Germany (in three Soviet Notes to Adenauer, April 27, June 27 and September 7, and at Foreign Minister Gromyko's press conference on September 10, 1957).

On October 2, 1957, the third and present stage was reached. Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki announced at the United Nations General Assembly that, by agreement with the other Warsaw Treaty countries, Poland would ban production and stockpiling of atomic and nuclear weapons if the two German Republics did the same. Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Vaclav David followed on the same day to announce a similar offer by his country. Lothar Bolz, Foreign Minister of the German Democratic Republic, announced his government's agreement a day later.

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On December 9 the Polish Foreign Minister made the formal proposal to the British, French and American Ambassadors. Soviet Premier Bulganin declared Soviet support in his letters to Eisenhower and Adenauer (December 10), Macmillan and Gaillard (December 11): and so did Gromyko in his foreign policy report to the Supreme Soviet session (December 21).

The proposal has been supported by Nehru, Tito, the Belgian Speaker Camille Huysmans and many other statesmen: and also by the leaders of the West German Social-Democratic Party.*

At first opponents of the proposal alleged that no provision had been made for 'controls', *i.e.*, for supervision of strict fulfilment of undertakings not to manufacture or stockpile nuclear weapons. This was absolutely denied by Rapacki himself at the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Parliament (December 13)—when he offered the 'most effective control', to be discussed and agreed once the principle was accepted—and again in an interview published in the *Sunday Times* (January 5, 1958). The U.S.S.R. has offered to discuss all possible forms of control at a meeting of heads of Governments (in Khrushchov's speech at Minsk on January 22 and by interview with West German editors on January 29, and in the joint Gromyko-Rapacki communiqué on February 1).

Another argument, coming from the Foreign Office and Defence Ministry, is that the zone would weaken or break-up NATO. Apart from the fact that the Soviet Union has proposed that both NATO and the Warsaw Treaty be merged in a common European Security Organisation, it should be noted that *one* State of NATO, its area 95,000 square miles and population 50 millions, would drop out—whereas *three* States of the Warsaw Treaty, with an area of 214,000 square miles and a population of 60 millions, would drop out on the other side.

In any case the non-German States of NATO co-operated to their mutual satisfaction during the war and before NATO was formed in 1948—why not now?

2. *Withdrawal of foreign troops from a broad zone in Europe.*

It was the Soviet Government which took up Eden's suggestion and developed it in definite proposals, made by Molotov, then Foreign Minister, at the Foreign Ministers' Conference held in Geneva (October 31, 1955). What it proposed was (i) a zone of

*We are not here dealing with the various plans put forward by leading members of the Labour Party.

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limitation and joint inspection of armaments in Europe, including the two German States and 'all or some neighbouring states'; (ii) maximum levels for American, Soviet, British and French troops, 'stationed in the territories of other States in this zone', to be fixed.

Macmillan made the fantastic counter-proposal that (i) Germany should be unified immediately by 'free elections', *i.e.*, that West Germany swallow up East Germany; (ii) it should be free to join NATO; (iii) that, in return for demilitarising its eastern territory—*i.e.*, the former German Democratic Republic—a zone of the Eastern European countries should be demilitarised too. Thus NATO would remain in being, while the Warsaw Treaty organisation would be broken up!

Since then the Soviet Union has repeated the essential features of propositions again and again, in the most flexible forms, to be taken either separately or together:

(*a*) withdrawal of all, or one-third, or 'a substantial number', of foreign troops from *both* parts of Germany, with a corresponding withdrawal of armaments; and

(*b*) withdrawal of all foreign troops from, or their 'considerable reduction' in, the territory of both Warsaw and NATO States, with reduction of armaments accordingly.

Proposals on these lines have been made in official declarations by the Soviet Government (*e.g.*, the Warsaw Pact statement of January, 1956, mentioned earlier; the Soviet Government declaration on disarmament on November 17, 1956; the Soviet Notes to United Nations members on December 11, 1957, and January 8, 1958) by its official spokesmen in statements to the Disarmament Sub-Committee and the General Assembly, in diplomatic Notes and press interviews. In all, there are on record five such confirmations in 1956, twenty-six in 1957 and (already) three in 1958.

The latest published (at the time of writing) was that by Khrushchov in his interview with the German editors already mentioned (published by the Soviet press on February 8):

> In Western Germany to the best of my knowledge, much attention is being devoted to the proposals of the Soviet Government for the gradual reduction, and then at the next stage, of the complete withdrawal, of foreign troops stationed in the territories of all States of the North Atlantic Alliance and the Warsaw Treaty, with simultaneous winding up of the foreign military bases, these measures to begin with Germany. One might have thought that such a proposal, fully in keeping with the national interests of the German people, would have met with approval from the German Federal Republic.

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> Given the abnormal present concentration of troops and war material in Germany, for peace-time conditions, to break away from each other the armed forces of the Great Powers which are in contact with each other here would at the same time promote the strengthening of security in Europe.

Both this proposal and that for the nuclear-free zone are, of course, halfway houses for the massive reduction of armies and of conventional armaments on both sides; the complete prohibition of nuclear and atomic weapons; and the destruction of stockpiles—all these measures under stringent international supervision—which the Soviet Union has also proposed. Moreover, it continues to press for other half-way measures to promote world peace which could be immediately declared upon by a meeting at the summit—stopping of hydrogen bomb tests for two or three years; a pledge not to use nuclear weapons; a pact of non-aggression between Warsaw and NATO States; and an agreement to keep the use of force and arms deliveries out of the Middle East, replacing them by economic aid.

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A MINER LOOKS BACK

O. Floyd describes child labour down the pit—not 150 years ago, but in his lifetime

I WENT to work underground at 12 years, the ninth son of the family, and still another followed me. I acquired a knowledge of the pit language a bit too quickly and tried it out on an elderly man during my first shift. He told my father in the local over a pint. At once the enraged parent left the pub, and I was called before him for questioning. He thrashed me with a four-foot wired carriage whip stock and held me to it by grasping a neckerchief that I had round my neck. Whilst he repeatedly asked me if I would ever cheek my elders again, I was only able to answer 'No' once because I was being strangled. After eighteen months I got notice at that pit, with 200 others, and learnt the meaning of redundancy. I had to leave home and the county to find work elsewhere.

That brought me to my second pit. Here I was sent a long way up a road to tell a man whom I should meet that I had come to help him. When this fellow asked me if I could 'lash on,' I said No. He told me to take my coat off and try. After watching him I tried and was successful the first try. The fellow buffeted me and called me a little liar. He left me alone to do the job which involved attaching a hook at the end of a four-foot chain, then wrapping the other end of the chain round a running rope three times and using the hook at the other end of the chain to fasten the rope to the wagons and pull them a mile and a half to the pit bottom. I had managed to do the truck several times to the satisfaction of the corporal before he left me. Then I got my fingers fast and had to go to the pit bottom attached to the rope. I let them know I was coming, but nobody seemed in a hurry to set me free. Then the contractor knocked the chain, released my fingers, told me to go back to my work and look sharp about it; and he kicked my behind. I told him that I should not always be a little 'un and off I went with my injured fingers that he had not even looked at. I left that pit after my first pay, which was 2s. 2d. a shift.

Then I tried my luck at my third pit when I was just 14 years old. It was a new pit and there was no price list for the lads. When I got my pay I was disgusted to find I had dropped 2d. a shift.

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That evening I spent asking questions of every youth I met in the street about where or which pit he worked at and what was the price list for lads. With my retentive memory I put the rate for the age at several pits on a piece of paper. Next morning I read these figures out to the other lads in the stable; all were underpaid. Up spake the older youths and we agreed not to turn the ponies out, but go to the pit bottom and tell the undermanager what our trouble was about.

'Well', said the undermanager, 'what do all you lads want here at this time? Why haven't you turned the ponies out?'

The oldest youth at once told him that we were not going to turn the ponies out unless he promised us more money. The undermanager said: 'Who isn't?'.

The youth replied: 'I'm not'.

And I said: 'I'm not either'.

He took a running kick at the big youth with one foot, then at me with the other foot and even to this day I still think I hit the wall first.

I convened my first meeting that morning and we all met at the junction at snap time. I told the lads I was sore in more places than one and the only thing to do was to see the manager. But we all could not go and we should have to send a 'toathre': it meant a few, deputation was a word that had not then got into my vocabulary. So they decided on four, and the other three made me spokesman. The manager was a most frightening sight to behold at any time, but on his own midden he could be terrible indeed. When he bellowed at us: 'What the hell do you young buggers want?' all my saliva fled and I was speechless.

'Eh? what do you want?'

By now I had found my tongue and told him our errand, that we wanted a wage same as was paid at the other pits nearby.

'Oh, do you', he growled, 'and how much does thee get?'

'Two shilling.'

'And how old does thee reckon to be?'

'Fourteen.'

'Does thee want a man's money, and thee ought to be at school!'

The next got 2s. 2d.

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'And thee not as big as him and he only gets 2s.! And thee, what does thee get?'

'Two and four, Sir.'

'And if it comes to lifting a tub on the road thee could not lift as much as him and yet thee get 4d. more. And what does thee get, big 'un?"

'Half a crown, gaffer.'

'Half a crown, half a crown,' cried the manager, 'thee gets nearly as much as me. Get off home the lot of you.'

But I protested that we had been sent by all the other lads and we were speaking for them and they had promised to stand by us. At that he took all four names and lamp numbers. Then in a different tone, having tried out the old, old trick of Divide and Conquer he told us to go home and 'get some dinner, as you must be ready for it'.

But the leader of the rebels wanted to be quite sure that the mission had been successful, so I asked him:

'Will you promise to see into the matter, and may we tell the other lads that you have promised to see into things?'

'I can promise that it will be seen to all right. Off you go, lads.'

We went home very light heartedly; 'something attempted, something done'. When the next pay day came we found that every lad in the pit had got the wage increase, but we four. We were wild. At the pit gates early the next Monday morning at 5.30 a.m. I made my first speech. As the men came along we told them to stand by as we were going to have a meeting. When about 100 men had got round us I jumped on an overturned tub and told the men that there would not be any pony drivers until the manager had put the wages question right for the lads. We persuaded the men to stand by us as they would shortly be making a price list for the men. The men backed us and the stoppage lasted a week.

The officials from top to bottom made my life one long misery. Even my own brother, who was a clerk, turned against me and supported the official attitude. At the end of ten weeks I left and got a job on nights at another pit at 3s. 6d. a shift. That was my fourth pit and I was still not yet fifteen; but they were formative years.

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LABOUR DISCUSSION FORUM

WAR ON THE UNIONS *and their wage claims and some problems of organising in defiance of it; answers to the young clerk who wanted to know why his conditions were better than those of well-organised industrial workers; Zionism and its alliances—these are some of the varied subjects which correspondents write about this month. Another sends us quotations he has collected from his 'elders and betters' about peace and wars, between 1914 and 1958. Contributions to these Forum pages which contain 'gems of bovril-ised wisdom' (as one reader indulgently puts it) should reach us not later than Monday, March 10, addressed to: The Editor, Labour Discussion Forum, 134, Ballards Lane, London, N.3.*

That 'Eezi-Way' Pay Plan

In the fight for a decent wage today there are some tendencies which need watching—quite apart from the more brazen attempts to swing wage-freeze over on the trade unions. For example, whilst on the one hand the basic wage is so low, on the other there are factors which make it possible for men to rely on favourable local conditions to win a sizeable pay packet in one shop—and never mind Jack round the corner. But that nurtures the very reverse of the only spirit which is any real defence. (Despite the motto 'Defence, not Defiance' there can be precious little of the first without the second.) The only defence, of course, is a spirit of class struggle, on a national basis. This piece-meal wage struggle may well be the softening up process for the local employer's piece-meal big squeeze and redundancy—when Jack round the corner may be too busy to mind.

Another tendency to watch with suspicion is all the current propaganda about long-term agreements, whether of the Chandos variety or imported from the U.S. Typical of such schemes are those for annual, bi-ennial or five yearly agreements with annual percentage increments depending on increased productivity. A case of the Pay-Instalment-Plan the Eezi-Way, no doubt; and no easier in the long run than any other Never-Never touch. In 'good times' the worker never catches up with his own increased productivity; when things are even less stable than usual his fight to defend himself is weakened, headed off or at least postponed. By which time he may be on the stones, with some four and a half million others, as in the U.S. today. Such schemes sap the strength of organisation and militancy. The miners learnt that lesson from bitter experience sixty years ago, when the Sliding Scale tied their wages automatically to the selling price of coal. Schemes like this appear just when the Government and employers attack the unions left, right and centre: left—with bans on pay-claims and inquiries; right—with witch-hunting and interference in internal affairs; and centre—with an onslaught on collective bargaining, rent increases and credit squeezes. These are part of the same attack, which comes from all sides. We have been warned; have done with Eezi-Ways.

O. GRIFFITHS,
Warwicks.

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France Has Fierce Problems

How right L. Green (February Forum) is to stress the necessity of studying more attentively the well-directed day-to-day activities of the working-class movement in France, with its great Communist Party and the General Confederation of Labour working with it. While in Britain in 1955 a Conservative Government was voted to power, France was moving steadily to the left. The Communists form the strongest party in the French Parliament, and their eight-page *L'Humanité* sets a splendid example of what a worker's newspaper can become.

We must seek to develop a closer solidarity with the most important progressive movement in Western Europe, confronted as it is with even fiercer problems of rising living costs and colonial warfare than we are.

REGINALD BRIDGEMAN,
West Middlesex.

Zionism's Allies.

I had hoped that the February issue might contain a reply to Vera Grey's points by someone better qualified than myself, who am neither Jew, nor Arab nor British Imperialist. This was not to be, so I put in my word despite my disqualifications; because for nearly twenty years now I have had to think and re-think out my own attitude to what used to be called 'the Palestine Problem'.

In my 'teens, just entering the movement, I can remember Zionist friends telling me that one must support right-wing Zionism against the alliance of British imperialism and the Arab landlords. When I said, with youthful confidence and over-simplification, that I thought the tactics of Britain were just 'divide and rule' pure and simple I was strongly attacked.

A few years later as a soldier on leave from the desert I visited a kibbutz for three days. I can remember sitting most of the night arguing with young Zionists. They were at that time furious over the brutal turning away from Haifa by the British of an 'illegal' immigrant ship and its subsequent suicidal sinking. The argument of those young men was for an immediate state of armed conflict with the British occupying power and if this helped the Germans, then what the hell: things couldn't be worse! Such was the despairing nihilism into which the bankruptcy of the alliance of right-wing Zionism with imperialism had led the youth. This state of mind gave the basis for the subsequent terrorist actions of a section of Zionist youth, such as the assassination of Lord Moyne and adventurist attacks on Allied lines of communications, at a time when the war against German fascism had still two or three years to run.

Vera Grey writes: 'A Socialist Palestine could have absorbed these people (*The immigrants*) without harm to the existing population'. If wishes were horses, beggars would ride! There wasn't a 'Socialist Palestine'. There never will be under any form of traditional Zionist political leadership. As for her bland remark that 'under the prevailing system . . . some dispossession was almost certain to take place'—this sounds like a Tory Minister on the effects of the Rent Act. This attitude can lead to toleration of the present racial laws in Israel and the denial to Arabs of civil rights and entry into better paid employment. Soon it will be held that 'under the prevailing system' Arabs in Israel

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should wear a yellow crescent on their chests.

Can I ask Vera Grey, before she seizes her pen in fury to reply to me, to re-read Dutt's brief notes on this problem and see what he really said and what he really advocates as a solution?

D. WALLIS,
Palmers Green.

Divide and Rule in Palestine

Vera Grey pleads for intellectual honesty and then goes on to justify Zionist alliance with British Imperialism on the grounds that it enabled thousands of Jews to escape massacre by finding refuge in Palestine.

In this alliance Zionism was in effect supporting Britain's policy of using the Jewish Home in Palestine to divide and maintain its rule in the whole area. Zionism cannot therefore escape responsibility for the hundreds of Jewish and Arab lives lost in the pre-war revolts and conflicts which this policy engendered. Nor can the European peoples be blamed for the crimes of reactionary governments. Pogroms and persecutions are long established ruling-class weapons to keep the mass of the people under control.

But what is least intellectually honest is that whilst insisting on the right of the Jews to live Vera Grey ignores the rights of the Arab refugees, on whose land many of these Jews are now living.

Whether, as she believes, a Socialist Palestine could have absorbed the pre-war Jewish immigrants without harm to the existing population is an academic question. What is more to the point is that the Jewish State will never provide peace and security for its people so long as it continues to be the ally and tool of imperialism.

A. WINTER,
London.

Divide and Rule 'Upstairs'

Des Hannon asks why office workers enjoy better conditions than industrial workers although they are less well organised and less militant.

Employers have always tried to keep different types of workers divided and distrustful of each other. This is not easy when they work alongside. But if many are in the workshop wearing overalls and a few are 'upstairs' wearing black coats? And if those few know a bit too much about prices, books and balance sheets, whilst the many are well organised and militant? Then it is worth the boss buttering up the black coats and giving them different conditions, to keep them out of touch. Better pay 20 clerks more if you want to pay 2,000 productive workers less.

So the answer is: clerks are better off because workers are well organised and militant. When the clerks do their *own* organising. . . !

A. RICHARDSON,
Yorks.

No Future In It

The young man who chooses office work because he gets better pay and hours than in the factory had better think again. There is no occupation where automation has made quicker inroads than in some branches of clerical work, especially in book-keeping. There is no future in it. The future lies with the producer.

PHYLLIS THOMPSON,
Southwark.

Pearls of Peace?

We should always learn from our elders, and who knows?—they may be our betters Here are some pearls they have cast before us:

Was Grey Red? 'The enormous growth of armaments in Europe, the

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sense of insecurity and fear caused by them—it was these that made war inevitable. This, it seems to me, is the truest reading of history, and the lesson that the present should be learning from the past in the interests of future peace, the warning to be handed on to those who come after us.' (Lord Grey of Fallodon, Foreign Secretary 1905-1915, from *Twenty-Five Years.*)

Ding, Dong-WHAM! 'May the guns ring in a new age, a bigger God and a larger Heaven.' (Rev. A. J. Waldron, M.A., Brixton, November 7, 1914.)

Dove of War. 'A thirty-centimetre gun may voice the edict of God as truly as the notes of a cooing dove. The sword of America is the sword of Jesus.' (Harold Bell Wright, Christian author, U.S.A., 1917-1918.)

Consolation of Religion. 'When the outlook is veiled by the war-cloud, it is good to know that God is on His Throne.' (Rev. J. C. Carlile, Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church, August 22, 1917.)

Baptising Buddha. 'I look upon the enlistment of an American soldier as I do on the departure of missionary for Burma.' (Baptist Minister J. A. Francis, California, 1917-1918.)

The Quality is not Strained. 'God could stop the war, but in mercy abstains from doing so.' (Rev. Robert F. Horton, M.A., London, February 4, 1917.)

Great Deterrent? 'When we support this war we follow the Great Peace-maker. We deny Him if we refuse.' (J. F. Morgan, Presbyterian Church, Jersey City, U.S.A., 1917-1918.)

Invisible Progress? 'It was necessary in this age of Materialism that something should shake us away and bring us back into the contemplation and service of the Invisible. This war is bringing us back to God.' (Rev. Reuben Saillens, D.D., *Christian World Pulpit,* December 4, 1918.)

Peace Presses. 'Were the Press of the world resolutely and unanimously determined not in any circumstances to support a war policy, or any policy provocative of war, then peace would be assured.' (H. M. Richardson, former General Secretary, National Union of Journalists, May 2, 1932.)

Press and Sup-press. 'In a number of important countries the Press is controlled by governments; in others by military or political censors; in still others by manufacturers of war material or by foreign subsidies.' (Mr. Cordell Hull, former U.S. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, April 23, 1934.)

Bombers Way Over His Head? 'In 1932 the Disarmament Conference assembled, and almost its earliest discussions were centred around the possibility of the total abolition of Air Forces . . . I had the utmost difficulty at that time, amid the public outcry, in preserving the use of the bombing aeroplane, even on the frontiers of the Middle East and India, where it is only owing to the presence of the Air Force that we have controlled these territories without the old and heavy cost in blood and treasure.' (Lord Londonderry, May 22, 1935.)

Defence Mechanism? 'The fact remains that the United States is the hub, periphery and indeed only solid bastion of the free world's defence. And . . . America is in an uncertain state of mind.' (*The Times* leader, January 1, 1958.)

Maybe there is a moral in all this.

'JOKER',
Cheshire.

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SHIFTING THE 'WHITE MAN'S BURDEN'?

'Dogwatch' logs two trends in the Labour Party about the colonies — socialist and non-socialist.

WHEN a Tory ex-Chancellor makes mourning speeches in presiding over the dissolution of the British Empire, the shadows are indeed falling fast. But Mr. Peter Thorneycroft's open lament over the impossibility of Britain 'sustaining our position as one of the world's major overseas investors' (January 23, 1958) was anticipated months before—in the Labour Party. Tories are willing to do anything for the people—except get off their backs. And there is nothing like the Colonial question for testing the socialism of socialists.

Take three M.P.s who spoke in the debate at the Labour Party conference on October 4, 1957. W. R. Blyton, M.P., Houghton-le-Spring, said that 'it must not go out from the platform of the Labour Party that we are against private capital being invested in the colonies'; nor should it be made 'more difficult for the legislatures of the emergent nations to get private capital to come into their particular country'. It would be a pity by 'rash statements' about nationalising firms which exploit them to 'embarrass the colonies'. (He should note some highly unembarrassed speeches at the Afro-Asian conference!) L. J. Callaghan, M.P., Cardiff South East, thought him right. What the colonies needed was 'an infusion of private capital as well as public capital'; and he considered the 'main enemy' in the colonies was 'hunger, disease, malnutrition, poverty'. (The Afro-Asians have a single word for that: imperialism.) Finally, Barbara Castle, M.P., Blackburn, explained: 'We do not want a situation in which colonies hive off from us into a dangerous world so economically weak that, having won their freedom from us, they are made dependent on some other great power which might have less disinterestedness in their future'. The one per cent of the national income which the Labour Party proposed to allocate for development would amount to £169 million. It would mean we should 'have to postpone some of our own local demands', and even so the colonies would still 'be desperately short of finance'. And speaking for the National Executive Committee against the only socialist resolution about the colonies before Con-

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ference. Mrs. Barbara Castle anticipated Thorneycroft by saying: 'Britain is no longer a large investor in the world; we are no longer a great financial power': and she warned delegates to beware of an 'utterly unrealistic' resolution.

What were the exact proposals which were so 'utterly unrealistic'? They were given scarce any publicity at the time. For the record we print them below, together with the speeches of mover and seconder.

The resolution was as folows:

This Conference, in view of the Labour Party's acknowledgement of our indebtedness to the colonial territories, implicit in the decision to devote at least one per cent of the national income to aid such areas, urges the next Labour Gevernment to end the exploitation by British capitalists of the resources of the colonies, by the following means:

(a) The nationalisation of all commercial and industrial concerns registered in this country which have large holdings in the colonies;

(b) the transference of the ownership of these enterprises to the people of the colonies concerned;

(c) greatly increased economic aid for the colonies for their development through the cutting of the defence budget, the institution of a capital gains tax, etc.

In his speech moving the resolution, **Mr. J. Alford, of South Paddington,** gave these reasons:

Economic aid is nothing more than subsidising imperialism, unless exploitation is at the same time stopped. Imperialism itself will reap the benefits of economic aid, and not the Colonial people, unless we are very careful indeed. The ending of exploitation is essential, if the Labour Party decision to devote one per cent of the national income to aid is to have any meaning. Take Malaya, for example. In the five years, 1949 to 1953, net interest, profits and dividends sent out of Malaya, mainly to this country, totalled £204 million. Malaya has a population of less than eight million people, out of a total colonial population of about eighty million. Even if it had an equal share of the £160 million aid of one per cent from national income, it could not expect more than £16 million a year of such aid. But Malaya is economically more advanced than many African countries, and therefore could not expect more than the £16 million a year—£80 million in five years.

What, then, is the use of giving Malaya between £10 million and £12 million a year of aid, when British capitalists are taking over £40 million a year out in profits? In fact, a large part of the £10 million or £12 million we would send to Malaya would find its way, inevitably, into the pockets of the capitalists. Therefore, we have to be very careful when we give economic aid to the Colonies. We have to see that we have Governments there, and concerns which are owned by the Colonial peoples and used in their interest, and not used to exploit those peoples.

The question of how exploitation could be stopped, and what the Labour Government could do to help stop it, is a wide one. The resolution submitted by South Pad-

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dington Constituency Labour Party puts forward two proposals: the nationalisation of Colonial holdings in this country and their transference to the Colonial peoples concerned: and more economic aid as well. The first proposal is that of nationalisation. Take, for example, Northern Rhodesia. You have to be very careful there, because national transfer to the Government in Africa would give them the economic power to suppress the people that they did not have before. The key, of course, lies in the words of the resolution: that these things should go to the peoples of the Colonies concerned. Transference must be to administrations which truly and democratically represent the Colonial people of that country.

The first effort of the Labour Party in this country, must be to work for democracy in the Colonies. The difficulty of such questions relating to Colonies is that there are many different types of Colonies. In some, the problems are comparatively easy. Malaya has politically a highly developed people. Independence is going to be given by the Tories to a politically reactionary group. If we are going to give economic aid there, with some guarantee that the peoples of Malaya are going to manage their affairs and put it on a sound social basis, then we have to alter the set-up in Malaya.

I turn to the question of defence cuts which would help the Colonies. The emphasis placed on cutting the defence budget so as to get finance for economic aid for the Colonies will find support, I am sure, from this Conference. Quite apart from the hydrogen bomb, there are a lot of armaments in this country which we could cut to help the Colonial people. From the working class point of view in this country, it would mean simply switching production of guns and tanks to tractors and all the other things necessary to meet Colonial needs. It will mean, therefore, increased employment for the working class people of this country as well.

I move the resolution.

Rising to second the motion, **Mr. S. Newens of Epping,** said:

When we talk of economic aid to the Colonies, we have to remember that at the present time we are sucking a large amount of wealth from those Colonies and preventing them from using their own resources to develop any economic power that they might have. And when I use the word 'we', I am using it in a very loose form; really it is not the mass of the working people of this country but the capitalist class of this country. When we talk about economic aid to the Colonies we have to be ready to stop those people, whom we oppose when they are sucking the wealth from the mass of the workers in this country, from taking it away from the Colonial peoples.

We know the terribly low standard of life which the people in those areas are forced to put up with. If we were to cut off this continual stream of wealth from those countries, which is coming into this country and going into the pockets of people who spend it in a most extravagant and wasteful manner, we should be giving the peoples of those Colonial territories a tremendous opportunity to use their own resources to develop their countries. It is very nice for us to say, 'We are going to give the backward countries one per cent' and so on, but if we were to say here and now—irrespective of the one per

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cent of which I am all in favour—'We are going to see that you enjoy the full resources of your country, and we are going to prevent British capitalists from sucking wealth out of your country, like parasites', it would be better.

So long as we allow the present state of affairs to continue, we are merely paying lip service to the idea of economic freedom of the Colonies. Political independence is going to mean little so long as we hold these people in economic thraldom. We shall be complete hypocrites if we say: 'We want these people to develop their countries', but at the same time we stand forth and allow the wealth that could be going into their pockets and be spent on schools, technical development and all sorts of other things, to go into the pockets of British capitalists to be spent in an extravagant and wasteful way. It is high time that we, as a Labour Party, declared ourselves in support of this particular resolution and the ideas embodied in it. I call upon you all to support it.

Mrs. Barbara Castle, M.P., for the National Executive Committee opposed it.

The resolution was rejected.

WHAT MR. THORNEYCROFT REALLY SAID

For twelve years we have been attempting to do more than our resources could manage, and in the process we have been gravely weakening ourselves. We have, in a sense, been trying to do two things at the same time. First, we have sought to be a nuclear power, matching missile with missile and anti-missile with anti-missile, and with large—I am not suggesting that economies have not been made—conventional forces in the Far East, the Middle East and the Atlantic at the same time. That is one branch of endeavour which we have attempted. At the same time, we have sought to maintain a Welfare State at as high a level as—sometimes at an even higher level than—that of the United States of America.

We have been trying to do those things against the background of having to repay debt abroad during the next eight years of a total equal to the whole of our existing reserves; against the background of having to meet maturing debt in this country next year at a higher level even than the very high level of business; against the background of seeking to conduct a great international banking business and against a background of sustaining our position of one of the world's major overseas investors. In those circumstances, it is small wonder that we find some difficulties. . . .

Those are not unworthy aims, but let no politician, of any party, be under any illusions as to what all this has meant. It has meant that over twelve years we have slithered from one crisis to another. Sometimes it has been a balance of payments crisis and sometimes it has been an exchange crisis, but always it has been a crisis. It has meant a £ sterling which has sunk from 20s. to 12s. That is not a picture of the nation we would wish to see. It is a picture of a nation in full retreat from its responsibilities. That is not the path to greatness. It is the road to ruin.

(Hansard, January 23, 1958.)

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SLITHERING TO RUIN

HUGO RATHBONE

PETER THORNEYCROFT, Chancellor of the Exchequer, resigned on January 6 (was reviled for it by the Prime Minister) and then some three weeks later gave his reasons to the Commons in a remarkable speech (garbled by many newspapers and therefore partly reprinted on page 137). In this he showed the cuts he wanted were both military and social. Leaving that aside we intend here to concentrate on the background to the crisis of Britain as he interpreted it and as has been so urgently and continuously discussed in all the British press and financial and business journals ever since the flight from the pound in September last.

As Peter Thorneycroft said, the reserves,* which stood at £858 millions at the beginning of February, will be swallowed up by the debt that Britain has to meet in the next eight years. This debt is to the United States and to a lesser extent Canada. The total amounts to some £2,294 millions. The repayment of some of it has been deferred to the year 2,000 under various agreements. Most of the remainder was incurred during recent crises such as those resulting from the Suez invasion and last year's flight from the pound. Now, not only have these reserves to face the danger of being wiped out by those American debts that are due to be repaid, but more immediately they are needed to face usual seasonal changes in the foreign trade position of the whole sterling area. In the spring and early summer other countries normally need sterling to pay for goods from the sterling area: in late summer and the autumn foreign countries require other currencies and normally tend to rid themselves of their remaining sterling holdings. Reserves are meant to meet this run.

Danger from the Bears

This situation will be intensified this year to beyond the danger point. For as a result of the flight from sterling last year what is called a 'bear position' was built up (on insistent London rumour) by exchange speculators all over the world. Deciding that the pound would be devalued, they sold large amounts of sterling which

*These are the central reserves of the sterling area. The figure would be doubled if there were added the private reserves of other sterling countries together with the 'secondary' reserves, and on this reckoning would make some £1,600 millions.

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they had not got. They contracted to produce this sterling at a future date, reckoning by that date the pound would have been devalued or at least have come down to a lower level than the one they had sold it at—when they could buy it cheaper and so make their profit out of the deal. All reports agree that in spite of the present strength of the pound and the temporary rise in the reserves this bear horde is still keeping these contracts renewed, sticking to their belief that devaluation must come. 'Lombard' writing in the *Financial Times* (February 5, 1958) claims that so far there has been only 'a relatively modest' liquidation of these contracts from the very high level of two to three thousand million dollars at which he understands they are believed to have stood at the height of the flight from the pound last year. So the sword of Damocles over the head of the pound consists not only of creditors from the U.S.A. but of this still enormous horde of bears.

Danger from Within

But there are many more such wielders of this sword. Let us take the sterling balances. These, amounting to some £4,154 millions, consist partly of the normal commercial sterling holdings of overseas traders which they use in buying sterling goods and partly of debts to the Dominions and Colonies. Some of these latter were contracted during the war; they were for goods which they had agreed to send Britain and for which they have not even yet received the equivalent in goods or money. Another large part of them has been built up since the war by marketing boards of cocoa, oils, etc., mainly in the African colonies, by the method of selling these raw materials well above the price they had bought them at from the producers when prices had risen so steeply. India is in the former category as well as Egypt before she left the sterling area; India is still owed some £214 millions (at the end of January), and Ghana and Nigeria are in the latter. India has already withdrawn some of these balances in order to assist the building up of her industry and Ghana now she is a Dominion has every right to do the same, so also is Malaya and on the horizon it is realised that Uganda and Nigeria may also soon gain this right. So the pound is further threatened by this ever present menace of the demand for the liquidation of these balances, even to the extent of £4,000 million if some new crisis faces it and a further* devaluation of the pound becomes necessary.

*In the autumn of 1931 the £ was devalued from its level as a gold or 'hard' currency—from $4.87 to the £ down to $4.03 to the £. In 1949 the £ was again devalued to $2.80 to the £, round which level it officially stands today.

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Dance of the Debtors

But there is still another danger. This arises from the fact that the U.S.A. has become the greatest capitalist power and consequently the greatest creditor. Some may remember how between the wars anti-American propaganda revolved round some such complaint to the U.S. as: 'We can't pay our debts unless you take more of our goods'. When that failed to let in the necessary flood of mainly European or European-controlled goods which was said to be battering at the American protectionist tariff door, that line of propaganda has now given place in the post-war world to 'The Menace of the Dollar Gap'—that is the ever increasing need to earn more and more dollars not merely to pay for goods from the dollar area countries but also pay the interest (let alone repay the capital) on the immense body of investments that the U.S.A. has now built up, whether in the form of loans or so-called grants or direct private investments. The true total of these investments amounts according to Sir Donald MacDougall in his recent 622-page study of *The World Dollar Problem* to the almost fantastic sum of 42,000 million dollars (£15,000 millions*) in 1955 (pp. 276-9). If the private sector of these investments increases, so MacDougall admits, at the same high pace and enjoys the same high earnings—as he says they seem to have achieved since the war—(even though with the reservation he makes that their true yield is not as high as the figures would seem to show), the transfer of these sums will create, in his own words, 'serious difficulties', especially if conditions are not 'favourable'. His only conclusion is that unless the U.S.A. agrees to transfer its capital through 'loans on generous terms', it must be prepared to accept a 'growing American import surplus of goods and services' (p. 279).

Dubious Remedies

MacDougall finally after reviewing all possible remedies comes to the conclusion that 'despite all efforts, the rest of the world is quite likely to run into serious deficit with the U.S.' (p. 413). So he thinks that further devaluations are inevitable and help should be got from such bodies as the International Monetary Fund, on all whose decisions the U.S. has the right of veto. It becomes as clear as a pike-staff. Under such conditions—capitalist conditions—the rest of the world—the capitalist world—is becoming daily more in pawn to the U.S. Now MacDougall, as we indicated above,

*This and all further conversions are made at the rate of $2.80 to the £.

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thought that the crisis might be put off if conditions remained 'favourable'. But they aren't. The American recession is upon us and the most recent admission from the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board (*The Times,* February 7, 1958) is that it will be 'deeper and more protracted' than was expected. Harold Wincott, a *Financial Times* writer, in its issue summarising his tour of the U.S. averred 10 weeks earlier (November 28) that if U.S. steel production fell below 70% of capacity before the end of the year, the pessimists would be right. It was reported as falling to 67·9% in the press here on December 12 and has now reached the still lower point of 55·4% (*The Times,* February 3, 1958). No more needs to be said on this score of the likelihood of the onset of a much deeper depression than was expected in the U.S.—but no slump—perish the word!

MacDougall cautiously summarised the effects of a moderate recession as currently expected at the beginning of January in an article in the *Financial Times* (January 6, 1958). He foresees the possible loss in the reserves of the non-dollar area at the rate of $1,000 million a year (£357·1 millions). Though small in relation to this area's total reserves ($20,000 million) (£7,142·9 millions) he nevertheless foresees consequent speculation against some non-dollar currencies such as sterling. Therefore he says they should concert measures not only to increase production but be prepared to impose 'discriminatory restrictions against dollar goods'. For obviously sterling faces a new crisis as a result of 'the downward spiral of trade' which MacDougall hopes these measures of his will prevent.

How to do this—to maintain the pound—has been the subject of a grand debate ever since the crisis in September last. Some say first increase reserves, others say repay the sterling balances, fund the sterling balances, abolish the foreigner's present right to sell sterling, make sterling a discriminatory club against all comers, have a variable bank rate as in Canada, see that the Dominions always consult with Britain before reducing their own reserves or restricting their imports or finally reduce or stop all capital export until the reserves are built up again. On the top of this comes two impressively made suggestions from Sir Oliver Franks as chairman of Lloyds Bank at its annual meeting: originally a philosopher, he became Ambassador to the U.S. from 1948-52. The U.S., he said,

*The dollar price of gold was last changed in 1934 when it was raised from $20.8 to $35 per ounce. This is in striking contrast to dollar prices generally which, it is reckoned, have more than doubled since then.

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must either grant Britain a stabilisation loan for sterling or else the International Monetary Fund should be reconstituted as a super central bank accepting the deposit of the reserves of any country and in return issuing certificates in exchange. By this means, as the *Manchester Guardian* explained (January 23, 1958), the existing supply of gold and dollars would be doubled. This last proposal smacks of the old idea of doubling or at least raising the price of gold against which the U.S. has for a long time set its face.* MacDougall in his book from which we have already quoted says, though this raising of the gold price would have an immediate advantage in increasing the liquidity of funds available for international trade, starved as they have been by the continual threat of a dollar shortage, its effects might lead merely to a postponement of the next crisis (p. 414). In any case, as he says, it would involve a devaluation of the dollar which is why the U.S. has been so resolutely against it, as no doubt it would, for the same reason, be against the Franks suggestion, too.

Commonwealth in Queer Street

Almost all the other proposals have met opposition from various authorities and experts or would obviously do so either here or in the Dominions. Before we examine the suggestion relating to the export of capital, which it will be remembered was one of the parts of Thorneycroft's background creating Britain's dilemma, let us see how the other parts of the Sterling Area, mainly the Dominions and the Colonies, are being affected by all this. The Dominions would certainly be against any increase in central control from Britain. They in particular are chafing against the operation of the imperial preference system. This was built up on the principle of Britain being the supplier of manufactured goods in return for raw materials from the Dominions and Colonies. Since Britain reluctantly agreed to the Dominions' insistence that they should industrialise their economy, South Africa and Australia, and now India and the Central African Federation, have followed Canada in developing an industry behind an ever higher protectionist wall. In this trend, of course, Britain has itself had to participate in recent years, if only because of the competition from the U.S., stimulated by its desire to take advantage of both the imperial preference system and the protectionist wall in each Dominion, by setting up rival manufacturing plants in Britain as well as in the Dominions. This makes the financial relations both between the Dominions and Britain and with the non-sterling area, particularly with the U.S., extremely

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complicated and even more sensitive to every fluctuation in Western capitalist economy.

The 7% bank rate and credit squeeze in Britain and the American recession has already led in the Dominions to tighter controls on imports and a running down in their own reserves in contrast to the recent increase both in the central reserves of Britain and its volume of trade. Quotations from the headlines in the British press graphically illustrate this:

Financial Times	January 20, 1958	Unemployment up in Australia.
	,, 25 ,,	New Zealand Trade Deficit Forecast.
	,, 27 ,,	Tough time ahead for Malayan Tin, Industry faces further Unemployment.
	February 4 ,,	Financial Crisis in New Zealand.
	February 8 ,,	Trade setback in Australia.
The Times	January 31 ,,	Credit Squeeze in Rhodesia, sequal to Copper price decline.
	February 7 ,,	Canada to Fight Unemployment.

As 'Lombard' in the *Financial Times* (February 6, 1958) pointed out 'almost all the main overseas sterling countries are now finding themselves in substantial deficit in their external accounts'. Many of them (noticeably the Rhodesian Federation, Australia, New Zealand, India and Pakistan) are restricting their spending abroad and others he thought, who have not yet faced up to their difficulties, will have to follow suit. Consequently though Britain has benefited initially by the reduction in raw material prices (by 10% for rubber, tea and tin and 20% for wool compared with a year ago), all this inflicts 'damage of a substantial kind on Britain's export trade'.

It is clear that while Britain temporarily rides the storm with its deflationary measures, it has succeeded in putting the Dominions into queer street and this is even truer of the Colonies with their almost total lack of industrial development.

(To be continued)

POET AND SCIENTIST SPEAKS

'In the countries with a socialist system the extensive use of nuclear energy will further help the people participate in making political decisions, because their material and cultural life will be rapidly improved and their talents really and fully released. In the countries with a capitalist system it will bring about a temporary obstruction, because the partial use of nuclear energy in production will intensify monopoly by capital, further widen the gap between the rich and the poor, and accelerate the differentiation of society into two extremes. But these results will stimulate the people to action to change the social system. Judging from this ultimate result, we may say that the peaceful use of nuclear energy, in whatever social system, will promote the people's participation in making political decisions.'

Kuo Mo-jo, Chairman of the China Peace Committee, February 4, 1958.

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BOOK

The Political Economy of Growth. Paul A. Baran.
Monthly Review Press, New York. 308 pp. $5.

FROM a single reading it would no doubt be premature to 'evaluate' this new American book. But it is certainly one of the half-dozen important socialist works on political economy to appear since World War II. It is not just another essay in a field now academically fashionable; on the contrary it is a challenge alike to the eclectic sociology and to the mathematical abstraction which form the main points of departure of recent academic writing on economic development. It is, however, 'academic' in the good sense. For the thoroughness and vigour of its analysis are as admirable as its scholarship is both wide and deep. Indeed, one's only complaint is that the fascination of the footnotes may distract from the main argument. No such book can be easy to read; and while an aquaintance with academic controversies undoubtedly makes it easier, no one need be ashamed to return again and again, as I did, to a particular page or chapter. For surely our gratitude is best expressed by the care we devote to a critical discussion of Professor Baran's theses.

He first shows that the crux in economic progress is the size and utilisation of the economic surplus which each society generates (though is 'surplus' the right description for that part of the social product which a socialist economy consciously devotes to accumulation?). Applying this to development in the main centres of monopoly capitalism, he concludes that despite some countertendencies the trend is on balance towards stagnation. Applying it to colonial and dependant countries he argues that the alternative is either stagnation or socialist transformation as the condition of balanced industrial growth. About two-thirds of the book's 300 closely printed and argued pages are devoted to these two applications. A final chapter, The Steep Ascent, analyses development under socialism, especially in the U.S.S.R., arguing that 'a historical lesson of paramount importance is that socialism in backward and underdeveloped countries has a powerful tendency to become a backward and underdeveloped socialism'. One might perhaps suggest that this (very unhistorically) ignores the influence of one powerful socialist base upon the conditions of socialist transition in all countries, however backward, which follow that path at a later date.

Here, however, as also in his comments on the weaknesses of transitions where the socialisation of agriculture is postponed, or in his analysis of new inventions, trade union pressure on wages, and war expenditure as vital influences on growth, indeed in his analysis of the whole range of problems of contemporary capitalist and socialist development, one is met by cogent and stimulating argument. In short, Professor Baran has given us a most valuable tool for the continuously creative thinking which is the responsibility of every socialist.

R. BELLAMY.

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(*Continued from page ii of cover*)

it down. My special appreciation for *Where the Witch-Hunt Ends.* I was only a year old in 1933. Now I can appreciate more fully the meaning behind the last war and, even more important, realise the terrible dangers that beset us at the moment. L.M. is an inspiration to me'. A young engineer, having already recently won four new readers, he aimed to get five more on the strength of Harry Brotherton's article *The Unions Know Their Business* by using our specimen copy scheme. Readers find it stimulating to hear of such examples. Take the story of the English coalfield reader, who had two readers last February, ten by December, and with the help of a new miner reader, twenty-six this February. A literature organiser in the South Midlands wrote: 'We were impressed with his experience and we worked out a plan for sales and discussion with certain trade union branches, the trades council and people whom we had met at Workers' Educational Association classes'. Another keen circulation builder, who covers fourteen news-agents each month in the Central London area, reports that after some months when sales remained steady, which disappointed him, they have been rising since December. Certainly our article *Indonesia: The Facts,* so timely and uniquely revealing, is likely to build his sales further yet amongst the overseas and research students whom his customers supply.

Expenses mount; the price remains 1s. 6d. You can, as we have seen, indeed buy experience at a greater cost. A pensioner has cut 'my 'bacca bill by half: that will be a mighty blow. Less for Amory and a little discipline for myself'—and he passes us a shilling for the Fund. A Lancashire doctor pays for his copies to be bound and gives the volume to us to sell for the Fund. Proceeds from other gifts in kind are in the offing too.

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